

I Dare You

Module: Less Is More

Lesson 1: Restrain Yourself

Objectives:

Students will

- recognize that our propensity for excess has a negative affect on our physical and spiritual development
- identify spiritual disciplines as a way to combat the problem of excess in our lives
- recognize the difference between spiritual disciplines of engagement and spiritual disciplines of restraint (abstinence)
- begin to determine how a specific discipline of restraint (abstinence) might assist them in strengthening their relationship with God and becoming more like Jesus in how they live their lives

Materials Needed

- ☐ DVD Player and copy of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005) or equipment for showing YouTube video
- ☐ Several copies of popular magazines
- ☐ Medium-sized pieces of chart paper/Bristol board
- ☐ Scissors and glue
- ☐ Lesson 1 Handout – “Which Discipline Am I?”

Minds On

Say something like: It's easy to see that you and I live in a society that likes to get what we want when we want it. And...once we've got it, we usually want some more: Super-sized fries, microwavable meals, hi-speed, unlimited internet, new cars, new shoes, better gadgets, a better boyfriend, you fill-in-the-blank. But what about self-control? Self-discipline? Self-restraint? (Proverbs 25:28; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:19. If you have time, ask students to look up these verses and try to explain them in their own words). In the movie remake *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, we see a great example of the kind of destructive, lack of self-discipline I'm talking about in a chocolate-chomping little boy named Augustus Gloop. Let's watch:

Show a clip or two from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) (or the 1971 version entitled *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*) that highlight Augustus Gloop's uncontrollable appetite for candy. If you don't have a copy of the movie readily available you can use the following links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svHuVf6bPCw&feature=related> (5:55-7:34)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sh6lqQy_tQQ&feature=related (7:39-9:02)

Once students have seen the clip, ask: What, if anything do you think we can learn from what happened to Augustus Gloop?

Action

Say something like: In the book that this movie was based on, the author describes Augustus Gloop as being "deaf to everything except for the call of his enormous stomach."¹ We may all feel like we KNOW an Augustus Gloop but the truth is that we are all a little bit more like Augustus than we'd probably like to admit. Gluttony is the word sometimes used to describe eating too much food. But the word gluttony actually has a much broader meaning. Gluttony refers to indulging in anything to such an extreme that it affects our physical and spiritual development. Like too much shopping, too much music, too many extracurricular activities, too many hours on the Internet, too many trips through the buffet line, or even too much time with our friends. Obviously, none of these things are bad things in and of themselves. The problem is the **amount of time and energy** that we sometimes give to them.

¹ Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (New York: Puffin, 1988), 12.

Have students form groups and give each group a stack of magazines, a medium-sized piece of chart paper or Bristol board with the words “More Please”, several pairs of scissors, and some glue. Instruct students to work together to find words and images in the magazines that represent the excesses in our society. Ask students to cut out the images and glue them to the chart paper/Bristol board.

When groups have finished, invite each group to display their pictures and share some of their “excesses.”

When all the groups have had a chance to share ask: Were there any common themes among all of the collages? Were there any choices that you disagreed with? Why? Were there any “excesses” that you didn’t find in the magazines that you think should be mentioned? Why do you think that these specific things tend consume our time and energy to the point of affecting our physical and/or spiritual development? What do you think we should do about it?

Say something like: Anything we consume (or do) to an excess is unhealthy for us because, like Augustus, we are never satisfied or because it gets in the way of much more important things that God wants us to be involved in. We’ve got to ask ourselves the question, Are we trying to satisfy ourselves with possessions or food or compliments or attention or whatever, when what we need is for Jesus to satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts? If so, that’s one great reason to choose to train ourselves for something different by practicing some spiritual disciplines.

Ask students: Why do you think practicing some spiritual disciplines might help us deal with the “excesses” in our lives?

Say something like: Spiritual disciplines allow us to a) develop a much closer relationship with God and b) gain power to live life as Jesus taught and modeled.

Earlier we talked about spiritual disciplines of engagement but today we are going to introduce a different type of discipline called spiritual disciplines of restraint (or abstinence).

Have students form groups and give each group a copy of the handout entitled, Which Discipline Am I? Instruct students to work together to complete the handout. Remind students to reflect back on what they learned about disciplines of engagement in the pervious module. This should help them to make their choices. There are purposely no definitions provided for the disciplines listed in order to encourage discussion and deliberation among groups.

When groups have finished invite them to share their answers and work together to form some general consensus. Guide the conversation, allowing for some debate and disagreement. Generally speaking, disciplines should be classified as follows: Silence (R), Chastity (R), Celebration (E), Solitude (R), Fasting (R), Servanthood (E), Secrecy (R), Prayer (E), Meditation (E), Simplicity (R), Confession (E), Worship (E), Bible Study (E), Fellowship (E), Guidance (E), Sacrifice (R), Submission (E). For more study on these disciplines, check out the following books: Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster (1988), The Life You've Always Wanted by John Ortberg (2002), The Spirit of the Disciplines by Dallas Willard (1990)

Ask students: What is common about the disciplines that we have identified as disciplines of restraint (abstinence)?

Consolidate/Debrief

Say something like: You've already learned that a discipline of engagement means intentionally doing something (worshipping, studying). A discipline of restraint (abstinence) almost always means that we intentionally **stop** doing something or that we remove something from our routine.

Instruct students to choose one discipline of restraint (abstinence) from their handout and to share with their group how practicing that specific discipline could help to a) develop a closer relationship with God and b) gain power to live as Jesus taught and modeled.

Once groups have finished say something like: Next week we are going to begin looking at some specific spiritual disciplines of restraint (abstinence) and we'll try to identify, by digging in to God's Word, how these disciplines can help us to develop a closer relationship with God and to become more like Jesus in how we live our lives.

Close in prayer.